

HINDU REVIVAL MOVEMENT (ARYA SAMAJ) AND FORMER UNTOUCHABLE CASTES IN UTTAR PRDESH.

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ABSTRACT

Dalit mobilization and assertion in Uttar Pradesh received keen attention of the academia and public discourse after emergence of Bahujan Samaj Party as powerful party. Attempts were being to explore the roots of this assertive process. However these attempts were mainly confined to socio-economic and political domains. The question of how Dalits were assimilated into Hindu fold or why sanskritisation tendencies were so strong did not receive adequate attention. In this backdrop, this proposal aimed at exploring the process of interaction between Hindu revival movement spearheaded by Arya Samaj and Dalit castes of Utter Pradesh in colonial and post colonial period. This attempt is aimed at understanding the contemporary controversies related to right wing politics and Dalit castes. Historical trajectory on this process enable us to have better understating on the process of interaction between Dalits and Hindu reformist movement and formation of Hinduised identity to Dalits.

Introduction: - In 19th century several reformist movements originated in India. Among them Arya samaj is one of the important organizations that exercised significant impact upon revival of Hind society. It was founded by Dayanad Swarwati (1824-1883) in the year 1875. His vision

of Hindu religion is radically different from the orthodox Hinduism. He evolved a strong critique of caste system by claiming that shastras do not endorse caste system. He tried to prove on the basis of Vedas that birth is not the bases of caste but it is based on Karma, and said that learning of Vedas for Shudras was not forbidden. The establishment of Aryan Samaj by Swami Dayanand Saraswati created a strong movement to cure the social disorder and evils of Hindu society. The main objective of this organization was to provide the actual human rights to Shudras and women.

The Arya Samaj rejected everything that is not in conformity with the Vedas. While founding the first Arya Samaj at Bombay in 1875, Swami Dayanand laid down the following ten principles, which all the members of the Samaj are required to subscribe to and act upon:

- 1) God is the primary cause of all true knowledge, and of everything known by its means.
- 2) God is all truth, all knowledge, all beatitude, incorporeal, almighty, just, merciful, infinite, unchangeable, without a beginning, incomparable, the Support and the Lord of all, all-pervading, omniscient, imperishable, immortal, exempt from fear, eternal, holy and the cause of the universe. To him alone worship is due.
- 3) The Vedas are the books of true knowledge, and it is the paramount duty of every Arya to read and hear them, to teach and preach them to others.
- 4) One should always be ready to accept truth and renounce untruth.
- 5) All actions should be done conformably to virtue, i.e. after a through consideration of right and wrong.
- 6) The primary object of the Samaj is to do well to the world by improving the physical, spiritual and social condition of mankind.
- 7) All should be treated with love, justice and due regard to their merits.

- 8) Ignorance should be dispelled and knowledge diffused.
- 9) None should be content with his own good alone; but everyone should regard his prosperity as included in that of others.
- 10) In matters which affect the general social well-being of the Samaj one should discard all differences and not allow his individuality to interfere; but in strictly personal matters every one may act with freedom.¹

At the level of activism the Samaj undertook several activities to attract the attention of Dalits. These activities as follows: purification (shuddhi) to make them equal with upper caste Hindus: establishment separate associations for development of Dalits and provision educational facilities by establishment of schools and colleges. Pandit Ganga Ram, an activist of Aryan Samaj provided more space to Dalits with the help of Arya Samaj for their social development. He restored the many Dalits group by purification and wore them Yaghonpaveet. Arya Samaj undertook several purification (Shuddhi) measures to brought Dalits back to Hindu fold. In fact several times opposition took place to Shuddhi ceremony. There was an event of purification Dalits organized in Gawar village located in Badain District in 1888. In this occasion conflicts took place between Aryan samajists and orthodox Hindus over the issue of Shuddhi.² Another instance happened on 14 March 1903 when the internal committee of Syalkot Arya Samaj decided to pure the Meghs on 28 March at their annual festival. But here not only Hindus but also Muslims and Christians opposed this event of purification. In 28 March purification event only 200 Maghs were participated. This purification was strongly opposed by Rajput caste. Purified Meghs were beaten, prohibited from accessing water from wells and filed a false case to punish them. Ultimately Meghs were compelled to leave.

The idea of *Shuddhi* proposed by Dayanand grew and became powerful in Punjab initially and gradually acquired prominence in entire northern India. In Jammu-Kashmir the whole strength of one of these castes in one Paragana, about 10,000 was admitted into Arya Samaj. In Sialkot 3,600 persons of another caste were similarly raised. The *Bharat Suddhi Sabha* under the leadership of Pandit Ram Bhag Dutta reclaimed several thousand of people. In Lahore grand work was done among Hindu Sweepers and Chamars³

However, Aryan Samaj continued to work with Meghas. The Arya Meghoddhar Sabha was established in 1912 and this Sabha propounded the work of purification in systematic manner. Along with mental and religious education, different schools were started for them. In the hand-craft school of Arya Samaj, they started learning the work of carpenter, tailor etc. Megh, child started learning at Gurukul, Gujrawala and Gurukul Kangri without any fee. In 1918, the settlement of Arya Nager took place in which they build Arya Bhawan, Kanya Pathasala (girl school), and medical centre. In the course of time it was transformed as *Adarsh Unddharak Basti*. In 1912, for facilitating this work, they legally established *Dalitoddhar Sabha* in Delhi. This is a significant shift in politicization of Dalits. This association created a separate domain in which the problems of Dalits could be addressed within the framework of Arya Samaj. The objective of this Shaba was as following-

1. Expansion of moral values in Dalits castes in India.
2. To save them from religious attacks.
3. Abolition of the practices of myths of hatred.
4. To provide lost human rights to Dalits.
5. Expansion of education among Dalit.

Gradually Dalitoddhar Sabha expanded in several parts of north India. This Sabha performed different works like eradication of Begar Pratha, access to water in village wells, entry of untouchable in to temple, and expansion of education. Uttar Pradesh, Orrisa, Bihar, states Dalit Caste's like Chamar, Kurmis, and Dom's Passi's. Gola, Mushhar, Kacchi, Kawat etc. get influenced by the work of Arya Samaj's Dalitoddhar programme.⁴

Sister associations of Arya Samaj such as Arya Biradari Sammelan and Jati-Pati Torak Mandal in Punjab had done tremendous work, to break the caste boundreis within the framework of Arya Samaj. In the end of year 1917 at third session of Arya Biradari sammelan, several measures were proposed to eradicate caste system and untouchablity.

Gradually the importance of Dalits increased in Arya Samaj and its activities. Chiranjivi Bhardwaj founded the Arya Shiromani Sabha in the year 1890. This Sabha proposed several measures for eradication of caste discrimination and eradicated of caste system. Inspiring by this example, another association namely the Arya Biradari Samiti which dedicated for development of Dalits was established in 1907. Another notable association for advancement of Dalit was established in 1922 namely Jati-Pati Torak Mandal at the residence of Bhai Paramanand, which main work was to abolish untouchbility and reforming Dalit society. Bhai Bhumanand and Sant Ram were the prominent leaders of this association.⁵This association actively engaged in addressing the problems of Dalits.

Along with welfare measures, Arya Samaj also articulated for civil rights of Dalits. On 15 February 1911, The Tribune writer mentions that Arya Samaj demanded separate law to ensure the rights of Mahars and other Dalit groups in education and government employment in Bombay. In Bengal Legislative Assembly a petition was filed for similar provisions. In Uttar

Pradesh by the efforts of Thakur Marhsal Singh, the state legislation passes the Nayak Balika Sanrakshan bill in the year 1929. Besides this political activism, Arya Pratinidhi Sabha in United Provinces had opened a separate *Jara Mayapesha Vibhag* which conducted many work of resettlement, health and education. Arya Nagar colony of Lucknow is the best example of their residential settlement.⁶ In Uttar Pradesh thousand of Domis were reformed by Arya Samaj and several schools were opened for the Chamars. In the year 1917, at Calcutta session, G.N. Nateshan proposed a memorandum toward Dalits development and by accepting this B.G. Desai said that ‘by establishing social justice we can reach at the aim of self government’.⁷

Lala Lajpat Rai, prominent nationalist leader and active members of Arya Samaj emphasized on social equality as an essential factor for political strength. He delivered many speeches for the upliftment of downtrodden mass in general and Dalit in particular at Kashi, Moradabad, Barielly, Prayag etc. He denoted Rs. 4,000 for the education of untouchable children and opened the Tilak School for untouchable’s students. He advertised and expanded the consciousness among mass with his news paper *Vande Matram*. In December 1912, at presidential speech at Karachi purity Association, he said that: “In my thought there can be no any other discrimination except knowledge’.⁸ In May, 1910, in *Indian Review* he wrote that: “Education is the necessary need for these castes. There is a need of leader’s and social reforms from these castes. These leader and social reformer will allocate their position and contrition in society. There is a special need for educating of lower castes. Provide education to them with great efforts. Education of untouchables is helpful to salve our social problems’.⁸

Dayanand and his Arya Samaj indeed worked hard to represent the demands of Dalits in social reform and political spheres. Particularly in case of United Provinces Arya Samaj has done

tremendous work. The first and second generations of activists belonging to the Jatav community were educated in schools run by the Arya Samaj. The early advocates belong to Chamar caste such as *Pandit Sunderlal Sagar* and *Ramnarayan Yadvendu* were both educated in Arya Samaj schools, and both of their families were members of the Arya Samaj.⁹ *Ramnarayan Yadvendu* was a devote member of Arya Samaj and strictly observed all the rules and rites of the Samaj. He tried to root out bad habits of the people, like meat-eating, drinking, child marriage, etc.¹⁰ *Munkiram Choudhary* (1910-1954) protested against orthodox Hinduism. He accepted the teaching of Arya Samaj and observed almost all the practices of the Samaj very strictly. He was a staunch nationalist.¹¹ *Dharam Prakash* (1900-1972) was an Arya Samaji. He joined Arya Samaj in 1920 and strictly observed all the principles of Arya Samaj throughout his life. He was strictly vegetarian and teetotaler. From 1926 to 1927 he was supervisor of schools. He played an important role in Kumar Ashram established at Meerut in 1928 by Lala Lajpet Rai. He was member of the District Board; Meerut during 1930-32.¹² *Manikchand Jatavaveer* (1897-1956) was born in 1897 at Rajamandi, Agra in Uttar Pradesh. Manikchand had an innate urge for social work. Hence he decided to wage a war against the practices of untouchability. He started his social life as a member of the Arya Mitra Sabha in 1914. He was appointed as a teacher in a school run by the Arya Samaj, where the untouchable students were allowed admission.¹³ *Puranchand* (1900-1970) was born in August 1900 at Agra and belong to Jatav community. Shri Swami Shraddhanandji successfully convinced him to accept Arya Samaj. After joining the Samaj he became a strict vegetarian, and observed all the rules. He used to preach the tenets of the Arya Samaj to his untouchable brothers. He taught them to observe the rules of sanitation, vegetarianism and temperance. He taught them to live a life of high moral standard¹⁴

The factors that compelled Arya Samaj to take up the reform of Dalits as follows: Arya Samaj attempted to liberate Hinduism from the clutches of Brahman hegemony hence it tried to create a new social base for Hindu religion consisting of lower sections: it worried about the fact that many Dalit may convert to Islam or Christianity. These factors motivated Arya Samaj to take up the cause of Dalits actively. At the same time Dalits were attracted toward it as they were offered spiritual space which was denied by traditional Hindu religion.

By second half of nineteenth century Dalits of India were brought under the influence of self respect and emancipatory ideas. Political mobilization is perceived as an effective means to achieve this objective. Political mobilization of Indians in fact has strong roots in caste associations and their politics. Caste based politics in fact were a paradigm of Indian politics in second half of 19th century. Not only lower castes but also upper castes established caste associations to foster communal unity within castes. Some of the examples as follows: Brahmin Sabha, Kshatriya Sabha, Jat sabha, Kayasth Sabha (1888), Jain Sabha (1888), Rajput Hitkarini Sabha, Punjabi Khatri Sabha (1888-89), Yadav Maha Sabha came in to existence.¹⁵ Following the mainstream Hindus, Dalit too started forming Caste Associations in different parts of India and in United Provinces. These associations institutionalized structure to initiate the process of reforming socio-economic and cultural conditions. Social reform initiatives such as women education, abolition of child marriage and dowry were initiated. Besides this advocacy of healthy life style and abstain from non-vegetarian diet and drinking of liquor was articulated. These associations also undertook political fight by sending petitions to government related to their problems. In the domain of culture, awareness was created to celebrate saints belong to Dalit background. Many groups started celebrating the anniversary of Ravidas and people of this group joyfully participated in it. Some of the associations established by Dalits as follows:

Ravidas Mahasabha, Passi Mahasabha, Dhobi Mahasabha, Jaiswar Mahasabha, Kori Mahasabha, kureel Mahasabha, Chamar Mahasabha, Dom Sudhar Shabha, Shilpkar Sabha, Balmiki Mahasabha etc Association established in different parts of Uttar Pradesh.¹⁶

Even though Arya Samaj worked for betterment of Dalits, but it was done within the framework of hegemony of upper castes. Consequently Dalit activists of Arya Samaj move away from Samaj and mobilized Dalits with more radical ideology.¹⁷ Swami Achhutanand Harihar left Arya Samaj and emerged as prominent leader north India who revolted against varna system. He went to Agra in 1912 and opened a school in Jatav locality. It was the time when Jatav demanded for Jatav Mahasabha, with the support of Achhutanand, *Jatav Mahasabha* came in to reality in 1917. He becomes successful for framing “*Akhil Bhartiya Achhut Mahasabha*, with the help of leaders such as Ratan Devidas Jatiya and Jagat Ram Jatiya. In 1918, he founded the *Adi Hindu Mahasabha* at Delhi. From the base of this *Adi Hindu Mahasabha*, He fought for the social political rights of Dalits and spread the *Adi Hindu* movement in all parts of north India.

In 1925 Swami Achhutanand came to Kanpur and started social reform from this place and published a monthly periodical “*Adi Hindu*” as well as opened the branches of *Adi Hindu Mahashabha* in different part of India. *Adi Hindu Mahasabhas* conference held at Bombay in 1928, where he met Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and both decided to struggle for the Dalit emancipation.¹⁸

Most of the ideas of the *Adi Hindu* movement were also widely shared by other Dalits groups across United Provinces. Caste associations such as *Adi Dharmis of Dehradoon*, *the Kumaun Silpkar Sabha at Almora*, *the Jatav Mahasaha of Agra*, *the Dom Sudhar Sabha of Garhwal* and *the Chamar Mahasabha of Kanpur* were indeed influenced by the ideology of *Adi Hindu*

movement. Further, evidence from CID weekly reports of these years (1926-30) indicates a good deal of activities conducted by Adi Hindu Mahasabha.¹⁹

Dr. Ambedkar tired heard to cure the problems of Dalits at national level by the way of making them as a political force. He established *Schedule Caste Federation* in 1942 at Nagpur. In 1944 a big conference was held at Kanpur in which Dr. B.R. Ambedkar involved. And the people engaged to "*Adi Hindu movement*" participated in that meeting. Tilak Chandra Kureel appointed as the president of branches in Utter Pradesh. Several leaders actively involved in this association. Those as follows: Chandhori Shyam Lal Baretha, Harilal Jaiswar, Nand Lal Viyagi, Babu Lal Vaishya, Kalayan Chand Balmike (All from Allahabad), Gaya Prasad Prashant (from Lucknow), Bhagat Naipal Dal, Ram Avtar Pasi (Jaunpur), Dr. Dharma Prakash, B.P. Maurya, Sangh Priya Gautam, Babu Mangal Singh (All from Bareilly), Dr. Manik Chandra (Agra), Kannauji Lal (Farukhabad) etc. These leaders worked for socio-cultural reform and political representation for civil rights. Due the effort of these leaders several Dalit castes established caste associations. Some of them as follows: Chamar Maha Sabha (Kanpur), Dhanuk Maha Sabha, Dusadh Maha Sabha, Tantuyai Maha Sabha, Pasi Maha Sabha (Lucknow, Allahabad and in other parts of U.P.), Akhil Bhartiya Khalik Maha Sabha (Kanpur Allahabad, Varanasi, Lucknow and in other areas of U.P.), Dhobi Kalyan Samiti (Lucknow and in other big cities), Jaiswar Maha Sabha, Valmiki Maha Sabha, Ravi Das Maha Sabha etc. These caste associations tried to act as guide to caste members in political mobilization and social reform.²⁰

The Scheduled Caste Federation which was an umbrella association for Dalit castes in United Province. In 1946 federation asserted the movement with following issues:

1. Residential Buildings and colonies for Dalit on government expenditure.

2. Asked for representation according to Poona pact in new constitution for Dalits.
3. Abolition of criminal tribe act of 1871. In this act around 3000 people get imprisonment.²¹

In the transfer of power, 1942-47 have taken as important period where a new chapter was going to start in Dalits future. Against the identify of Adi Hindu Jatav started their assertion with in this caste system.²²

Conclusion: - This article tried to show the complexity of Dalti politics in colonial India. Most of the mainstream studies on Modern India project the activities of Indian National Congress, Muslim League and Communist Party of India as center of political organization. At the same time most of the studies on Dalit history concentrate on famous leaders such as Jotiba Phule and Ambedkar. But this article argues that colonial modernity infused dynamism in the socio-economic structure of Dalit castes by the way of providing employment in urban sphere. Having liberated from traditional exploitation of upper caste at one level and exposed to western ideas at another level Dalits organized and mobilized politically for civil rights. The political mobility of Dalits took place at three stages. Firstly Dalits were organized by reformist associations established by upper caste reforms such as Brahman Samaj and Arya Samaj. Secondly, various Dalit castes established caste associations to articulate their demands with government at one level and social equality at another level. Finally Dalit leaders converted the grass root level awareness to national level by establishing national level political associations. This article attempts to prove that Dalits are extremely consciousness of political rights and established several social reform and political associations for achieving better life.

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